

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

and objectionable, urging her to shun publicity and to seek solitude, since the latter was the way of the Saints, while hers was that of hypocrites and seekers of their own praises. Raimondo and Bartolommeo attempted to keep the letter from Catherine, intending to send a sharp answer on their own account; but she insisted upon hearing it, professed the warmest gratitude to the writer for his solicitude for the welfare of her soul, and rebuked the two friars for their uncharitable interpretation of his good intentions. Her own answer is extant, written, she tells him, "with the desire of seeing us united and transformed in that sweet, eternal, and pure Truth, which takes from us all falsehood and lying " :—

" I thank you cordially, dearest father, for the holy zeal and anxiety that you have for my soul. You seem to be in great doubt at what you hear about my life. I am certain that nothing moves you save desire of the honour of God and of my salvation, for you fear that I may be assailed and deluded by the devil. I do not wonder, father, at your having this fear, especially in the matter of eating ; for I promise you that it is not only you who are afraid about it, but I myself tremble for fear of deception by the devil. But I put my trust in the goodness of God, and mistrust myself, knowing that upon myself I cannot rely. Not only in this, but in all I do, I always fear because of my own frailty, and because of the astuteness of the devil, thinking that I may be deceived ; for I know and see that the devil lost blessedness, but not wisdom, and with that wisdom, or rather astuteness, he could deceive me. But I turn, then, and cling to the tree of the most holy Cross of Christ crucified, and thereto I would be fastened ; and I doubt not that, if I be fastened and nailed to it with Him, through love and with deep humility, the devils will have no power against me, not because of my virtue, but by the virtue of Christ crucified. You bid me specially pray to God that I may eat. I tell you, my father, and I tell you in the sight of God, that I have always tried in every possible way, once or twice a day, to take food ; and I have prayed continually, and do pray to God, and will pray that He may give me grace in